

Can There Be Another Winston Churchill?

By Harry V. Jaffa

On the night of the tenth of May, 1940, on the eve of the ill-fated Battle of France, Churchill became Prime Minister of Great Britain. As he went to bed, he tells us, at about 3 a.m., he was "conscious of a profound sense of relief. At last I had the authority to give directions over the whole scene. I felt as if I were walking with Destiny, and that all my past life had been but a preparation for this hour and for this trial."

Churchill was 65 years old when, for the first time in his life, he "had the authority to give directions over the whole scene." He never doubted that, had he possessed such authority in 1915, the Dardanelles strategy could have been successfully executed. Nor did he doubt that, had it been so executed, the First World War could have been brought to a successful conclusion some time either in 1915 or 1916. Had that happened the nations of Europe might have been spared the terrible blood-letting of the last two years of the War, and the main political structures of the nineteenth century dissolved by the War—among them the Russian, German, and Austro-Hungarian monarchies—might have endured far into the twentieth century. Had this happened, Churchill believed, the changes brought in the name of Progress—of Science, of Democracy, and of Equality—might have been less revolutionary, less bloody, and more salutary than any we have in fact known.

"Is the march of events ordered and guided by eminent men; or do our leaders merely fall into their places at the heads of the moving columns?" This question—which he put in 1932—fascinated Churchill throughout his life. In one form or another, he asked it of every great event of his lifetime—and not of his lifetime alone. "Is human progress the result of the resolves and deeds of individuals, or are these resolves and deeds only the outcome of time and circumstances? Is history the chronicle of famous men and women, or only their responses to the tides, tendencies and opportunities of their age? Do we owe the ideals and wisdom that make our world to the glorious few, or to the patient anonymous many? The question has only to be posed to be answered."

The question which was so rhetorical to Churchill was, he knew, answered very differently by others. Indeed, the theme of the essay ("Mass Effects in Modern Life") from whose opening paragraph we have read, is that individuals are increasingly submerged by the giant scale upon which modern life is increasingly organized. It is a complaint against mass communications, large corporations, the

standardization of production and consumption. It is a complaint against the conscious and unconscious, voluntary and involuntary collectivization of life and thought. It is a complaint against a world in which "the resolves and deeds of individuals" have become more and more insignificant, if not illusory. Churchill's answer to the question posed above is then a moral one. A world made by tides and tendencies, and not by wisdom and virtue, is a world he repudiates. He does not really say that it does not exist; on the contrary, he finds that this is the kind of world which, in ever increasing measure, we find ourselves inhabiting. But he does not accept it; he will not accept it. Churchill looks at this aspect of the modern world much as Coriolanus looked at Rome. Rather than submit to it, or acknowledge its power, he will banish *it*.

The underlying theme of nearly all Churchill's writing between the two world wars was just this: the scale of life in the modern world is too large for human virtue to control. The great commanders, from Caesar to Cromwell to Marlborough to Napoleon, could comprehend the entire battlefield from a single point upon it, and by the penetration of their genius grasp upon the instant the totality of its changing relationships. The orders they issued dominated a reality whose own highest purpose was to be dominated by them. Two of Churchill's multi-volumed masterpieces—*The World Crisis* and *Marlborough: His Life and Times*—are devoted to demonstrating the obverse and the reverse of this theme. Marlborough was representative of the great commanders of the past. *The World Crisis* narrates the failure of a world in which great commanders no longer command. It describes the unraveling of policy, so that war becomes blind slaughter, the vehicle of no great purpose, human or divine—such for example as Lincoln saw in the American Civil War. It is the crisis of a world in which the characters of men are no longer the dominant factors in determining the character of their lives. Churchill remarks somewhere in *The Second World War* that in war it is impossible to guarantee success, that it is possible only to deserve it. War—and indeed all of human life—is subject to chance. Churchill recognizes the role of chance in the same sense as Aristotle. Human well-being requires virtue *and* good fortune. The world Churchill repudiates is one in which the coincidence even of virtue and good fortune does not produce well-being; or perhaps one should say that it is one in which fortune, instead of being fickle, is constant in its hostility to virtue. It is a world in which human agency is so swallowed up by "mass effects" that courage and genius appear impotent and irrelevant. It is a world in which it seems senseless to do other than to march with the strongest legions, and in which vulgar success seems better than noble failure.

Before the rise of Hitler Churchill saw in Bolshevik Communism the incarnation of everything in the modern world that was hateful to him. ("The Nazi regime is indistinguishable from the worst features of Communism." *The Unrelenting Struggle*, p. 171) Yet he was well aware of the sense in which Communism was a radicalization of tendencies drawn from non-Communist or pre-Communist modernity. It was in the western democracies that there first appeared "enormous numbers of standardized citizens, all equipped with regulation opinions, prejudices and sentiments, according to their class or party." The Russian Bolsheviks only carry "by compulsion mass conceptions to their utmost extreme." "The Communist theme aims at universal standardization." Not standardization, but "universal standardization," with compulsion, is what distinguishes Communism. Under

Communism the "individual becomes a function: the community is alone of interest: mass thoughts dictated and propagated by rulers are the only thoughts deemed respectable." Yet Churchill was not unaware of the evils of spontaneous conformity generated by the leveling tendencies of non-Communist modernity. In his understanding of this he is not inferior either to Tocqueville or John Stuart Mill. The progress of democratic modernity "appreciably raises the general level of intelligence," but it is "destructive of those conditions of personal stress and mental effort to which the masterpieces of the human mind are due." The imposition of mass thoughts by Communist dictatorship is loathsome. That it may however cause great personal stress is beyond question. The regulation of opinion by the more impersonal process of standardization with which we are familiar in the free countries may be more insidious and, in the long run, even more deadly to the soul. "Modern conditions do not lend themselves to the production of the heroic or superdominant type," Churchill wrote in that essay, more than thirty years ago. I do not think that he would be surprised to find that he has no successor in the free world today; but that from the bowels of old Russia has arisen such a reproach and such a challenge to Bolshevik despotism as he himself was wont to cast.

Churchill ends *My Early Life*, published in 1930—when he was 56 years old—by recording that on September 12, 1908, he had married and "lived happily ever afterwards." That assertion has quite properly been interpreted as a tribute to his wife, and the epitaph of their marriage, surely one of the most remarkable that history records. But when he wrote those lines Churchill's marriage and his life were destined to endure for 35 more years. And Churchill, who had read the *Nicomachean Ethics*, knew that no man can be called happy before the end. Two years after *My Early Life*, Churchill published *Amid These Storms: Thoughts and Adventures*. It is a collection of essays on a variety of subjects, written mostly in the mid-1920s. It may, for the most part, be described as episodic autobiography. The first chapter is entitled "A Second Choice," and begins with the words, "If I had my life to live over again." Both the end of *My Early Life* and the beginning of *Amid These Storms* imply that Churchill's life is somehow complete, that it is a subject of contemplation rather than a field of action.

This impression is strengthened by the Preface of the latter book, which begins by speaking of "the extreme diversity of event and atmosphere through which a man of my generation, now in its twelfth luster [three score years] has passed and is passing." From the "settled state of order" of the Victorian era through the "incomparable tragedy of the War" his life has passed to the present period of "confusion, uncertainty and peril." Churchill notes that "many of these papers touch on the lighter side of grave affairs," but he hopes that at least two of his essays ("Shall we all Commit Suicide?" and "Fifty Years Hence"), which "are offered in deadly earnest" will not be taken "merely as the amusing speculations of a dilettante Cassandra."

It is difficult for us to think that Churchill could ever have been thought—or could ever think that he would be thought—a "dilettante." Some twenty years later, on one of his last visits to the United States, he was asked by a reporter what it was that first led him into politics. The old man rumbled as the question filtered through his defective hearing. Then came the answer, "Ambition!" And what, sir, the reporter continued, kept you there all these years. "Anger!" Certainly there has never since Alcibiades (to whom in his youth he was frequently compared) been a more ambitious man than Churchill. But that ambition, through a very long life, was harnessed to righteous anger: anger at Tory narrowness, or at the mean-spiritedness of Socialism; anger at Germany's challenge to British naval power, and at the invasion of Belgium; above all, anger at the inhuman cruelty and tyranny of Bolshevism and Nazism. Churchill was always a man to take arms against the tides of trouble, never one to float passively upon them. Yet at the end of the 1920s, when his countrymen were tired of struggle and, as it seemed, tired of him as well, Churchill seemed destined—in his own mind as well as in the minds of others—to be no more than a spectator of the deadly scene.

The two essays mentioned foretell the multiplied horrors of any future wars, wars whose beginnings were already being prepared. There is scarcely any great scientific development with which we are now familiar, including nuclear fission and fusion, and the genetic revolution in biology, which is not anticipated in the second essay. That Science, while permitting a more comfortable life for the masses, also is providing the instruments of destruction and of tyranny, unparalleled by anything in the past, is a thesis set forth with the greatest comprehension. Churchill was certainly never a dilettante. The more famous warnings of the later 1930s have however a theoretical foundation in his writings of the 1920s and the early 1930s.

Some of the horrors Churchill considered in "Fifty Years Hence" have not yet come to pass. This however is but a chilling reflection since the time has not fully elapsed. But perhaps the worst of the horrors is a vision, neither of tyranny nor of war, but of the good life. It is one Churchill says he had recently encountered in a book he had read that "traced the history of mankind from the birth of the solar system to its extinction." "In the end a race of beings was evolved which had mastered nature. A state was created whose citizens lived as long as they chose, enjoyed pleasures and sympathies incomparably wider than our own, navigated the interplanetary spaces, could recall the panorama of the past and foresee the future." This is the utopia that seems to be promised to us by the perfection of the modern scientific understanding, the modern scientific understanding both of human and of subhuman nature. The citizens who "lived as long as they chose" might be the Struldbrugs of *Gulliver's Travels*, with the difference that these "immortals" apparently retain the option of death. One wonders—and one wonders how Churchill wondered—at the meaning of "past" and "future" for beings to whom both were a matter of present knowledge. However, we need not speculate what Churchill's response was to the whole of this vision. "But what was the good of all that to them? What did they know more than we know about the answers to the simple questions which man has asked since the earliest dawn of reason—'Why are we here? What is the purpose of life? Whither are we going?' No material progress, even though it takes shapes we cannot now conceive, or however it

may expand the faculties of man, can bring comfort to his soul. It is this fact, more wonderful than any that Science can reveal, which gives the best hope that all will be well."

I do not know that there is any more revealing passage in all of Churchill's writings. I do not know anywhere that he asserts more categorically the absolute disjunction of modern scientific progress and intrinsic human well-being. The perception of this disjunction must have shaped Churchill's attitude toward the world more powerfully than any merely political judgment. Churchill certainly thought that Science had brought many good things to mankind. Yet he must certainly have thought them instrumental goods, rather than final ones, if he could expostulate, "what was the good of all that...?" Man's humanity, according to Churchill, is found above all in his ability to consider the "simple questions which man has asked since the earliest dawn of reason." These questions are the ones to which Biblical revelation and Socratic political philosophy are, above all, addressed. In *The Second World War* (Volume 5, p. 456) Churchill remarks that "No two cities have counted more with mankind than Athens and Jerusalem. Their messages in religion, philosophy, and art have been the main guiding lights of modern faith and culture." It is *ancient* Athens and *ancient* Jerusalem that have supplied the guidance to *modern* man. Churchill knew of course that there were modern messages in art, philosophy, and religion, messages that differed from, and were often in direct opposition to, those which came from the two ancient cities. One of the last essays in *Thoughts and Adventures* is on "Moses: The Leader of a People," and is a retelling of the story of *Exodus*. Along with this retelling is a sustained polemic against "Professor Gradgrind and Dr. Dryasdust" who may be taken, not only as representatives of the higher biblical criticism, but of much else in modern thought. The end of the higher criticism is to transform the Bible into a merely human record of merely human purposes, to take away the awe and wonder which attends a pious reading of the sacred text. Churchill's reading is, of course, not exactly a pious one. Yet the events the Bible records are, from his point of view, of such heroic character, that to see the workings of divine purpose in them is, to him, entirely natural.

That Churchill can speak so confidently of what Science can and cannot reveal is itself something of a revelation. Churchill does not doubt that modern Science deals only with the subhuman, and not at all with the distinctively human, or with that elevation and transcendence of the human that is the divine. When Churchill speaks of "citizens" with "pleasures and sympathies incomparably wider than our own," he is speaking ironically. The key to that irony may be found in the word "wider." There is no reason to think that the interplanetary travel of the future—which may be taken as an example of these "wider" pleasures—will be any less boring than the jet travel of today. But what travel to another planet could ever be illuminated by such pleasures and sympathies as those described by Geoffrey Chaucer in the *Canterbury Tales*? What mystery could there be upon any unknown planet equal to the mystery of the Saint to whose shrine the Canterbury pilgrims were traveling? From Churchill's point of view the greatest discovery that interplanetary travel could yield would be the discovery of human life elsewhere in the universe. But to discover human life elsewhere in the universe means to discover, not other beings capable of interplanetary travel, but other beings

capable of asking the "simple questions." But why should we ask them ourselves? What greater mystery is there, or can there be, besides the one within each of our souls? Where can we look with better hope, for a light wherewith to lighten this mystery, than that which came forth, in olden times, from Athens and Jerusalem?

"Pleasures and sympathies incomparably wider than our own" might also be incomparably shallower. They could not be deeper. The expansion of the "faculties of man" of which Churchill speaks is part of "material progress." It does not relate to the power of the soul. The fact that "no material progress can bring comfort to the [human] soul" is itself said to be "the best hope that all will be well." Churchill's most formative years were spent during the heyday of what we might call the evolutionary enlightenment. This was the period when the progress of Science, and in particular biological science, gave rise to widespread hopes that the human species itself might deliberately be evolved into a state or condition in which famine, pestilence, and war, might no longer be necessary, or even the possible, conditions of the survival of the fittest. (Marxism is one particular expression of the ideals of the evolutionary enlightenment.) The fittest might be planned in laboratories, and the test of their fitness would be their faculty for the harmonious and simultaneous enjoyment of all the objects of their desires.

(Of course, their "natures" would be such that they would only desire those things that *could* be enjoyed simultaneously and harmoniously!) A perfect mastery of nature would permit and require a perfect freedom for man. ("Freedom" of course would be defined as the unobstructed satisfaction of desire.) But Churchill implies that this state of perfect freedom, were it possible, would be a state of perfect misery. Swift's *Struldbrugs* are perfectly miserable human beings because they cannot die. Churchill too seems to say that it is the necessity of death, as much as its possibility, that makes life purposeful; and that the necessity of death enforces upon human life the quest for its purpose and that without this quest for purpose life would lose its purpose. Without such a purpose, and the consciousness of such a purpose, life would be meaningless and unbearable.

Churchill rejects modern scientific utopianism, in part because it is undesirable. But he rejects it also because he knows it is impossible. It is, we have seen, an hypothesis of this utopianism, that there might be a "race of beings which had mastered nature." Coordinate with this mastery is the fact that they "could recall the panorama of the past and foresee the future." To "master nature" means to know the causes of all possible events perfectly because no event will transpire that one will not have caused. And one will not cause any event that is not necessary for the simultaneous and harmonious satisfaction of all desires. The necessities of the knowledge of the perfect human condition will determine all events in the world. It is for this reason that this race of the future will be able to know the future. Yet Churchill asserts that no material progress, which must perforce comprehend all scientific progress, "even though it takes shapes we cannot now conceive," can comfort the human soul. How can Churchill say that he knows that any possible future knowledge is

thus limited? And why is that known limit upon all possible future knowledge a cause, not of despair, but of hope?

In his denunciation of Bolshevism, Churchill finds the ultimate degradation to consist in the fact that "No one is to think of himself as an immortal spirit, clothed in the flesh, but sovereign, unique, indestructible. No one is to think of himself as that harmonious integrity of mind, soul, and body, which, take it as you will, may claim to be 'the Lord of Creation.'" We know from many sources, certainly not all of them apocryphal, that Churchill was fascinated by the question of the immortality of the soul. He did not accept it in any simple doctrinal sense, but it is just as sure that in some symbolic or paradigmatic sense it was an essential element of his being. Human beings rise above the level of the beasts, above all because they accept responsibility for their actions. They are responsible, not for the success or failure of those actions, but for their goodness or badness. Goodness and badness have an import beyond time. However difficult this may be to understand in any positive, non-mythical sense, we may perhaps understand it negatively. If the aim of modern science is to enable men perfectly to predict—and thus know the future—so as to place the future wholly within their power, then the excellence of human actions would be measured entirely by the results of those actions. It is because chance plays so large a role in the outcome of our actions that a standard of goodness or badness beyond results has always commended itself to men of superior virtue. Human identity is itself a result, not merely of human freedom, but of the interaction of human freedom and chance. Indeed, if there were no chance there could not be freedom. Such at least is the thesis of that essay of Churchill's which goes most deeply into these questions. It is called by him "A Second Choice," and it is the first essay in *Thoughts and Adventures*.

The title of this essay, as we have noted, is "A Second Choice." But it might have been called "A Second Chance." Choice and chance are not the same thing. An act of choice arises because of alternatives that are not predetermined. Chance affects the outcome of our choices in ways that are incalculable. An act may be impulsive, or it may be calculated. An impulsive act may be impulsive in different ways: it may be in response to the prompting of ingrained temperament and habit, or it may be in response to external forces which sway the agent in the moment of choosing or acting. An act of calculation may also be such in very different ways. It may attempt to estimate cause and effect through a long chain, each link of which is highly probable. But it may be improbable that such a long chain could be maintained unbroken, that every link would remain unassailed by unforeseen contingencies. On the other hand, someone may on the calculated ground of the imponderability of calculation abandon any attempt at foresight into a remote future, and decide therefore to gain every immediate advantage, and leave the future to take care of itself. Clearly, these

are opposite tendencies that might be attributable to the same ostensible cause. Churchill begins thus. "If I had my life to live over again in the same surroundings, no doubt I should have my same sense of proportion, my same guiding lights, my same onward thrust, my same limitations. And if these came into contact with the same external facts, why should I not run in fact along exactly the same grooves? Of course if the externals are varied, if accident and chance flow out through new uncharted channels, I shall vary accordingly. But then I should not be living my life over again, I should be living another life in [another] world ..." Thus we have given to us, at least in a formal sense, an answer to our question. Certainly there can be "another" Winston Churchill; but "another" means a different one. Churchill explains this quite simply by considering what happens when he goes to the Monte Carlo to play roulette and usually stakes—and loses—his money on the red. Had the ivory ball fallen, on a certain one of those occasions, into the red slot instead of the black, he might have made a lot of money which, prudently invested in Chicago Lake Shore property, might have made him rich. On the other hand, he might have been fired by his good luck into becoming a confirmed gambler. "Clearly," he notes, "two processes are at work, the first dictating where the ivory ball is to come to rest and the second what reaction it is to produce in me." If both of those vary, he observes, their interplay becomes too intricate to follow. Of course, it also becomes uninteresting because the identity of the actor becomes lost. To speak of an "I" having another choice, the "I" must in some sense be recognized as myself. In the same way—although Churchill says nothing of this—when men seek immortality, they do so for an identity that they believe they possess, although that identity is as indefinable, as much a matter of faith, as the immortality they seek for it.

As Churchill continues, it becomes clear that a second choice, to be real, cannot simply mean a repetition of the choice given to each of us at birth. To re-live the life we have already had, with nothing better "in health, character, knowledge and faith to guide one, would be pointless." If one repeated it in the same environment, the same results would follow. Such a life would be merely redundant. But what about bringing to bear the same character in a new environment? Churchill does not mention this alternative, although it is the one to which our attention will ultimately be directed. This alternative implies facing another unknown future, as if one's life could at once be completed, and begin anew. Here however Churchill elects to say that if "there is to be any reality in the new choice offered me, I must have foreknowledge." That is to say, "I must carry back with me to this new starting-point the whole picture and story of the world and of my own part in it, as I now know them." "Then surely I shall know what to make for and what to avoid; then surely I shall have success in all my dealings." He thus contemplates reliving life as it has been, with only one thing changed, namely, that he now knows in advance how things have already happened. With this knowledge he says he may "guide the human race away from the errors to which they are slaves, away from the endless tribulations in which they plunge themselves." Or, as Plato said, he may cause "evils to cease in the cities."

It is worth more leisure than we presently have to reflect upon this conception of omnipotence. In particular, we might wish to explore in what ways it resembles, and in what ways it differs from the

ring of Gyges, in Plato's *Republic*, which rendered its possessor all-powerful, by enabling him to become invisible at will. To know the future, and to control it by knowing it, means that it is already fixed. If it is already fixed, then one cannot change it. To say that everything about the future is determined *except* one's own agency (and its consequences) means that all natures but one are subject to determinism and necessity. In traditional theology, God's foreknowledge and man's freedom was a riddle transcended by faith; but faith and reason were admittedly different principles. Yet the simultaneous assertion of scientific determinism and the freedom to manipulate or control all nature—including human nature—is the contradiction which lies at the heart of all modern scientific utopianism, whether in its Marxist, Freudian, or behavioral forms. In a perfectly non-academic way, Churchill was perfectly aware of this. Oddly enough, the example Churchill selects to show what the character of this foreknowledge would be, is not one of saving mankind from its follies. Instead, he pretends to choose to use his foreknowledge for purely private gain, namely, by picking the winner of the Derby. He knows by remembering, who the winner was, and this time places huge "bets" (which aren't bets at all). But this intervention in the skein of causality, he points out, cannot change one thing only. It must change everything. For all events are related by a causality which has—to make foreknowledge possible—fixed everything in a determinate relationship with everything else. So much is this the case that, when the next Derby rolls around, Churchill has no benefit at all from his now obsolete foreknowledge. By "remembering" a future which is now no longer possible, his mind is cluttered with impressions which are irrelevant. In fact, he would be completely disoriented. The truth then is, that foreknowledge, were it possible, would remain such, only so long as the foreknower did not intervene in events. While he might hypothetically gain an advantage from a single intervention, the price he would pay for it would almost certainly outweigh it.

But why did Churchill pretend to use his foreknowledge to collect a fortune on a horse race? Why did he not use it for some great public end, such as getting the 29th Division in time to the Dardanelles in 1915, and bringing the World War to an early end? Of course, Churchill's example, like that of Plato's Gyges, reminds us that there is no reason to suppose that such omnipotence, were it possible, would fall into the hands of philosopher-kings rather than tyrants. He teaches instead the salutary lesson that the acquisition of such power would be self-defeating, even from the point of view of potential tyrants or other self-seekers. But let us reconsider Churchill's example. Let us suppose that, in betting on the winner of the Derby, he not only foresees this winner, but foresees all possible consequences of his winning. We will suppose—*ex hypothesi*—that instead of being disabled and disoriented he can intervene profitably in future events, including among such interventions the picking of future winners. Now, would not others soon recognize that his good "fortune" was not a matter of chance? Is it not certain that, unless he performed his interventions with the same mysteriousness attributed to God, that the rest of the world would soon find him intolerable, and do away with him? To avert this, would he not have to exercise an absolute monarchy, or tyranny, over the entire world? But suppose that Churchill together with all mankind could agree on how his ability to intervene in events might be exercised collectively for the common good. There would then be a single form of knowledge and a single course of action for all mankind. Mankind would thus be possessed of a single mind with a single will. By this it would have evolved

into that "higher" species upon which Churchill speculated. Foreknowledge would elevate the mental attributes of mankind into a providential god; but the material attributes of that same mankind would obey perfectly the stimuli, external or internal, imposed upon it by the higher principle. The divine part of man would itself obey perfectly the necessities of its own knowledge; the material, would obey the divine. Is not this the state or condition of things indistinguishable from that of the "universe" as conceived by the Bible, before the Creation, or at least before the creation of man? That difference is there between a world "formless and void," and one formed but lacking any consciousness of its form? If all mankind acts as if from a single mind, with a single will, then the world is divided, between universal mind, on the one hand, and universal matter, on the other. The creation of the world, as told in *Genesis*, culminated in the creation of man. God made the world so that man might be, as Churchill says, "Lord of Creation." But without such a "Lord," there would have been no Creation, since there would have been no being separate from God, in any proper sense. To end human error and human evil, by employing collective foreknowledge implies, not perfecting the human condition, but ending it, by returning it to the primeval condition which preceded Creation. Churchill anticipates this argument in his remarks on the Bolshevik regime, written in the early 1920s. "There is not one single social or economic principle or concept in the philosophy of the Russian Bolshevik which has not been realized, carried into action, and enshrined in immutable laws a million years ago by the White Ant." This observation applies as truly to Skinnerism—or behavioral social science—as to Bolshevism.

Scientific progress, thus conceived, can certainly bring no comfort to the human soul. And this is surely why Churchill said that it could not. Yet we need not fear such progress too much. Too much of it is not really possible. Human nature possesses an irreducible—or, if you will, an irremedial—capacity for resisting domination. We humans will not accept an harmonious arrangement of our lives that denies us all freedom to act as individuals. We cannot be compelled to act in a way predetermined by either the power of good or the power of evil in the universe. We will not recognize as good any course of action that annihilates our sense of responsibility for the course of our lives. We cannot care for a world, however ostensibly good, in which we cannot recognize ourselves, or any whom we love. The scientific collectivization of the world and its annihilation are ultimately indistinguishable.

The greater part of "A Second Choice" is concerned with the role, not of necessity, but of chance. "If we look back on our past life we shall see that one of its most usual experiences is that we have been helped by our mistakes and injured by our most sagacious decisions." We are sometimes saved from the consequences of our folly, and frustrated in our acts of wisdom and virtue, because of random interventions between cause and effect. But let us consider, that virtue would not be virtue, if its ends were always gained. To be steadfast in a good cause would not be admirable, if the cause

was predestined absolutely to triumph. If every error was unfailingly punished with failure, no one would err for long. It is the ability to recognize mistakes as mistakes, even if they are not punished; and to recognize wise and virtuous actions, even if they are not invariably rewarded, that makes the contrast between wisdom and virtue, one the one hand, and evil and error on the other. Churchill reproaches himself—altogether too mildly—for his addiction to nicotine. But then he remembers the time on the western front when he turned back for a matchbox, and avoided a shell which crashed near where he would have been had he gone on as he had intended. He also reproaches himself for having landed with the marine division at Antwerp in 1914, and having taken over the defense of the city in those early and crucial months of the Great War. "I might well have lost all the esteem I gained by the mobilization and readiness of the fleet, through getting mixed up in the firing lines at Antwerp. Those who are charged with the direction of supreme affairs must sit on the mountain tops of control; they must never descend into the valleys of direct physical and personal action." Still more does he reproach himself for not breaking off the naval assault at the Dardanelles—which he might easily have done—when Lord Kitchener "went back on his undertaking to send the 29th division to reinforce the army gathering in Egypt." In 1931 Churchill could still look back upon the Dardanelles as the decisive failure of his career. Elsewhere he reproached himself still more sternly for having undertaken to direct such a major project from a position of such inferior authority. Men, he said, are ill-advised to attempt such things. Still, in "A Second Choice," he observes that he has "mostly acted in politics as [he] felt he wanted to act." "When I have desired to do or say anything and have refrained therefrom through prudence, slothfulness, or being dissuaded by others, I have always felt ashamed of myself at the time," although he admits that he sometimes afterwards found out that he was lucky to have been checked. Yet today historians of World War I generally recognize that Churchill's actions at Antwerp probably saved the Channel ports by delaying for nearly a week the German advance. And this might very well have been the margin between victory and defeat in 1914. And the Dardanelles, although it did not succeed in knocking out Turkey, still brought Italy into the war. Today, it widely regarded as the only sound strategic concept of the first World War.

When the Lloyd George Coalition broke up in 1922, Churchill lost not only his position in the Government, but his seat in Parliament, a seat he was not to regain for two years—the only time in more than half a century he was to be out of that august body. "I was no longer a minister," he writes in "Election Memories," "And then a few weeks later the constituency which had sustained me so long repudiated and cast me out in the most decisive manner. And all this, mind you, at the close of a year when I had been by general consent more successful in Parliament and in administration than at any other time in my life." Thus the first time Churchill had worked loyally and smoothly in harness with others, did his job as quietly as he was ever able to do it, and things had even seemed on the surface to go well, he was rewarded by what seemed like a ticket to oblivion. An unlucky—as it seemed—attack of appendicitis had prevented him from electioneering in his usual manner. As he put it in one of his most sparkling sentences, "In the twinkling of an eye I found myself without an office, without a seat, without a party, and without an appendix."

However, by not having a seat—or a party—during those two years, Churchill was spared any share in the Liberals' fatal decision to put a Socialist Party into office. Thus the separation from his appendix separated him as well from the Liberal Party, just when continued association with that party might have ended all chances of his ever again holding high office. Instead, he made his reputation during those crucial years of political realignment as a foe of Socialism, and thus prepared his return in 1924 to the Conservatives.

By 1931, when Churchill wrote "A Second Choice" it seemed as if no more great political choices would be permitted him, at least in this life. By the time he resigned the Chancellorship of the Exchequer in 1929—having held for five years the office his father had held for only a few fatal months—his career had exceeded that of any of his contemporaries, as one biographer put it, "in duration and range." Yet at the very time he was writing this essay, he was organizing his long campaign against the policy of both the Conservative and Labor leadership, to start India towards dominion status. Of this campaign, one may say briefly that it was in flat opposition to all opinion, then and since, that has been generally regarded (and has regarded itself) as both progressive and enlightened. Churchill did however by his India campaign make himself more acceptable than he had ever been before to die-hard Tories, who had been his bitterest antagonists for more than a quarter of a century. Still, after his fight over India, no one could anticipate that Churchill would ever again occupy a position near the center of British political life.

His struggle against the rising tide of Nazi power began not long after the India question had died down. And he had begun to gain something of a hearing for his views when the abdication crisis rescued the faltering Baldwin, and turned Churchill into an object of derision, and even of contempt. With respect both to India and to King Edward VIII's unfortunate romantic proclivities, Churchill certainly acted as he felt he had wanted to act and had rejected all counsels of prudence. In a mass democracy, he had rashly set himself against the main body of feeling of the electorate. Yet in both of these matters he seems to have benefited by a prudence higher than his own, or than that of his critics. His romantic and feudal loyalty to Edward had, it is true, undercut all the serious arguments he was making about German rearmament. By trying vainly to keep the King upon an eminence to which he was not entitled, he helped restore Baldwin to an eminence he was not entitled. The true challenge came not from those who would not tolerate Mrs. Simpson, but from those who would not tolerate the Jews. It came above all from Adolph Hitler. Yet if there had been no abdication crisis, Churchill would almost certainly have been taken into the government, and he would have shared responsibility for Britain's plight at the outbreak of the war, thus tarnishing his standard as their leader in the war. And so Churchill's willfulness, his stubbornness, his refusal to take counsel against his own sense of the fitness of things—his preference, so to speak, to being shamed before the world rather than to be ashamed of himself—in the end served him better than he knew, or than he could have known. By 1940 he was the only man the country would trust to see it through. In 1915, when Churchill was being turned out of the Admiralty—altogether unjustly—Clementine had

made a desperate appeal to Asquith, the Prime Minister, "Winston may in your eyes and in those with whom he has to work have faults," she wrote, "but he has the supreme quality which I venture to say very few of your present or future Cabinet possess—the power, the imagination, the deadliness to fight Germany."

It was a long, long road, from that time of his dismissal from the Admiralty in 1915, until "Winston is back" was flashed to the Fleet in 1939. When Churchill wrote "A Second Choice" he thought that all the great choices and chances of his career were at an end. He thought that his career in high office, like that of his father, had ended as Chancellor of the Exchequer. Unlike his father, however, he had marched from office with his party, after five years in office. Unlike his father, he did not expect that the interruption of his career would be merely temporary. By 1939 he had written long and powerful books, vindicating himself, his father, and his greatest ancestor, the first Duke of Marlborough. And so he could conclude that essay by saying

I do not seek to tread again the toilsome and dangerous path. Not even an opportunity of making a different set of mistakes and experiencing a different series of adventures and successes would lure me. Let us reconcile ourselves to the mysterious rhythm of our destinies, such as they must be in this world of space and time. Life is a whole, and good and ill must be accepted together. The journey has been enjoyable and well worth making—once.

What lay ahead of Churchill when he wrote those words would make a long lifetime, not for a lesser, but for another very great man. The mistakes he was to make, and the toilsomeness and dangerousness of the path he was to tread, would exceed by far anything that had gone before.

In 1940, when he offered the British people—and the free world—"blood, toil, tears, and sweat," they trusted him as they could trust none other. Because they trusted him, they accepted their duty, and bore it onwards both in triumph and in tragedy. They knew that in their greatest of crises he would be true to them, because he had always been true to himself. Contemplating life as a whole must give us faith that, in the long run, chance is not merely indifferent to human excellence. Churchill's cosmic stubbornness ("Never give in, never, never, never, never!") was exhibited sometimes in little matters—in which it was sometimes grotesque—as well as in great ones. Yet in the end he seems more often than not to have turned bad, as well as good fortune, to his account. What he did at Antwerp and the Dardanelles, what he did about the India Bill and about the abdication, all became sources of reassurance to his countrymen when, after the fall of France, Britain stood alone. They did not know, as we may know, that his attachment to the cause of freedom had metaphysical no less than moral roots. But they did know, as Clementine had said a generation earlier, that he above all others has "the power, the imagination, the deadliness," to fight a Germany far deadlier than any enemy they had ever faced in their long, island story.

Can there be another Winston Churchill? In 1939, Winston Churchill did not think so. But, as so often in his life, he was mistaken. Let us take comfort in that.

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